

From: noreply-dphimmunizations@ct.gov <noreply@everbridge.net>

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Dear Connecticut COVID-19 Vaccine Providers,

Thank you again for your continued efforts in the COVID Vaccine roll-out. This email contains important information for COVID-19 vaccine providers – please read this message in its entirety.

Important information about vaccinations for individuals 12-15 years old

The biggest vaccine news this past week is something everyone probably already knows-- CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices voted to recommend Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for persons 12 through 15 years of age under the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization. Connecticut COVID-19 vaccine providers may now vaccinate adolescents aged 12 through 15 years.

Materials to support this expansion are being posted and updated on a rolling basis.

- The ACIP recommendation is available [here](#).
- Updated clinical considerations are posted [here](#). Summary of recent changes (last updated May 14, 2021):
 - Updated information for authorized age groups to include vaccination of adolescents ages 12–15 years with Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.
 - Updated information on [coadministration](#) of COVID-19 vaccines with other vaccines. COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines may now be administered without regard to timing.
 - A new section on persons with a history of multisystem inflammatory syndrome added to considerations for vaccination of people with certain underlying medical conditions.
 - Updated recommendation for timing of COVID-19 vaccine administration in persons with a history of heparin-induced thrombocytopenia.
 - Updated information on vaccination of children and adolescents.
 - A summary document of clinical considerations is available [here](#).
- Updated preparation and administration summary for [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) and [Moderna](#) vaccines.
- Updated standing Orders for [Pfizer-BioNTech](#) and [Moderna](#) vaccines.
- At this time, the composition of the ancillary kits for the Pfizer-1,170 dose trays will not change. When the Pfizer 450 dose tray become available (~ week of 31 May), there will be the option of ordering an associated pediatric ancillary kit that will be composed of 100% one-inch needles. More information about what is provided in ancillary kits is available [here](#).
- [V-safe](#) has been updated so that adolescents can participate.

Census tract-level coverage information

For several weeks, Local Health Departments have had access to census tract-level information about vaccine coverage. This data is now posted publicly, and we encourage local health departments, vaccine providers, and community organizations to reference this data to inform their targeting and outreach strategies. [You can view this data here.](#)

A brief overview of how to use these data will be provided on Wednesday's 9am COVID Vaccine Provider call as well as 1pm Local Health Director call.

Avoiding missed opportunities to vaccinate and minimizing wastage

- Several CoVP providers have contacted us with concerns over potentially wasting COVID-19 vaccines should they puncture a vial and not be able to use each dose within the needed timeframe.
- As access to COVID-19 vaccine increases, it is important for providers to not miss any opportunity to vaccinate every eligible person who presents at vaccine clinics.
- We recognize that as we continue to create more opportunities to vaccinate more people, it may increase the likelihood of leaving unused doses in a vial.
- Providers should follow the CDC's [clinical best practice for vaccination as well as best practices when managing inventory](#) to maximize vaccination and minimize dose wastage.
- **While we want to continue to follow best practices to use every dose possible, we do not want that to be at the expense of missing an opportunity to vaccinate every eligible person when they are ready to get vaccinated.**
- Please continue to use creative strategies to avoid wastage, such as:
 - o Shared provider waitlists, phoning or texting those with appointments in coming days to present early, inviting recipients to contact their friends to be vaccinated;
 - o Actively inviting in individuals who are in the vicinity (e.g., some providers have made PA announcements for grocery store-located pharmacies);
 - o Consider establishing and promoting standing vaccination days or half-days to increase likelihood of larger numbers of people presenting for vaccination on the same day;
 - o Vaccinate family members or friends who accompany patients to medical visits even if they are not established patients at the vaccinating practice;
 - o Continue outreach to employers or other community partners that have a large membership or network to arrange vaccination events.
- Once punctured, multidose vials must be used within 12 hours for Moderna, 6 hours for Pfizer, and 2 hours for J&J/Janssen.
- Continue to report vaccine wastage to the DPH [Helpdesk](#).

Update from CDC regarding post-vaccination monitoring

- In recent weeks, there have been reports of myocarditis occurring after COVID-19 vaccination, including in Europe, where the [EMA recently requested data from Pfizer and Moderna on reports of myocarditis and pericarditis after vaccination](#). CDC is aware of these reports, which are rare given the number of vaccine doses administered, and continues to monitor available data.
- As part of COVID-19 vaccine safety efforts, CDC has been monitoring myocarditis and pericarditis in multiple safety systems, including the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System \(VAERS\)](#) and the [Vaccine Safety Datalink \(VSD\)](#).
- To date, there has not been a safety signal identified in either VAERS or VSD. CDC will continue to evaluate reports of myocarditis/pericarditis occurring after COVID-19 vaccination and will share more information as it becomes available. Healthcare providers should consider myocarditis in an evaluation of chest pain after vaccination and [report all cases to VAERS](#).

REMINDERS

UPDATED CDC Webpages and Clinician Resources

- General information about COVID-19 vaccine products for clinicians and healthcare professionals can be found on the [COVID-19 Vaccination webpage](#).
- Clinical information including FAQs, Contraindications and Precautions as well as Administrative resources can be found for each vaccine on their own product webpage.
 - [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#)
 - [Moderna COVID-19 vaccine](#)
 - [Janssen/J&J COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- Recent updates to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Communication and Education Product Inventory
 - [FAQs for Private and Public Healthcare Providers About Implementing the CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Program in Provider Practices | CDC](#)
 - [Risk Benefit Analysis \(cdc.gov\)](#)

As always, please continue to encourage patients to register for V-safe; report adverse events to VAERS.

School Clinics

School leaders and local health directors are encouraged to continue coordinating with COVID Vaccine Providers to arrange Pfizer vaccine clinics for eligible students – currently 12+. The Department recommends that school leaders also plan for ways to provide access to Pfizer vaccine clinics to all eligible students. Approaches include:

- Host an on-site clinic in a school building
- Refer students and families to off-site vaccine clinics
- Reach out to the Department to discuss other school-specific strategies

Regardless of specific approach, we have learned in recent weeks that school-supported clinics are a highly effective way to serve our younger populations. If you would like help matching your school(s) with a CoVP provider and arranging student vaccine clinics — or if you have questions regarding how to effectively communicate with students and families to ensure maximum coverage — please reach out to Cameron Cross at: Cameron.Cross@ct.gov.

Staffing your clinics

To assist you with staffing your clinics, DPH has compiled multiple options for staffing vaccination clinics which can be found at: [Staffing Resources for COVID-19 Vaccination Sites \(ct.gov\)](#). The web page is updated regularly. We have heard from many nursing programs across CT, whose students are hungry for field-based experience. Additionally, over 1,600 professionals have been trained to administer COVID-19 vaccines, and there are over 11,000 licensed practitioners who have offered to assist (many for little to no pay). These individuals can assist in vaccinator roles, providing support for medical records or appointments, post-vaccine monitoring, or as greeters/traffic control. Please contact Francesca Provenzano (Francesca.Provenzano@ct.gov) and Bill Gerrish (William.Gerrish@ct.gov) for any questions or support.

Hospital Discharge Vaccination

All acute care hospitals should be offering COVID-19 vaccines to all individuals upon discharge to skilled nursing and assisted living facilities by May 17th. Hospitals should offer the J&J vaccine, but may offer an

mRNA vaccine if an individual refuses the J&J vaccine. We will work with long term care pharmacy partners and other providers to ensure the individual receives their second dose of mRNA vaccine.

Hospitals are encouraged to offer vaccines in their emergency departments as well. Hospitals may offer the J&J vaccine or an mRNA vaccine. Hospitals should not be discouraged from offering mRNA vaccines due to concern for loss of follow up. Hospitals should do their best to recall patients for second doses, but it is understood that some may be lost to follow-up.

Monitoring COVID Vaccine Expiration Dates

Providers should make sure to continue to monitor expiration dates for COVID-19 vaccines. Specifically, providers are encouraged to check the expiration dates for J&J vaccines and ensure they are administering vaccine on a “first in first out” out basis to avoid expiration, as many lots of the J&J vaccine have expiration dates that are sooner than those on the mRNA vaccines.

Please report vaccines due to expire within 30 days to the COVID-19 vaccine [ordering portal](#) so we can facilitate potential transfer of the vaccine to another CoVP Provider to avoid wastage. Please report this information to the ordering portal even if you are not placing an order on that particular week.

Information on how to determine the expiration data is available for each vaccine below.

Janssen: The expiration date is NOT printed on the vaccine vial or carton. To determine the expiration date: Scan the QR code on the outer carton, or call 1-800-565-4008, or visit www.vaxcheck.jnj.

Pfizer: Use CDC’s beyond-use date labels for this vaccine to track storage time at refrigerated and frozen temperatures.

Moderna: Scan the QR code on the vial or carton, enter the lot number, and the expiration date will be displayed, or visit [http:// www.modernatx.com/covid19vaccine-eua](http://www.modernatx.com/covid19vaccine-eua).

Moderna vaccine: new 15 dose vials and storage and handling updates

The Moderna vaccine is now primarily being supplied in 15 dose vials. **The vial is the same size as the 10 dose vial was but is filled to the higher volume.**

- A new NDC has been issued for the larger volume Moderna vial, which has been given a range of 13-15 doses in the EUA.
- The larger volume vial may contain 15 doses of vaccine. However, it will not always be possible to extract the 15th dose. This is based on the overfill in the vial and the type of syringes used to administer the vaccine. Therefore, vaccination providers should expect to withdraw 13-15 doses from each vial. Each dose must contain 0.5mL of vaccine.
- When the amount of vaccine remaining in the vial is not a complete 0.5mL dose, discard the vial and the residual vaccine regardless of the number of doses withdrawn. Do NOT save vials to combine residual vaccine from more than one vial to get a complete dose. An unextracted 15th dose does NOT count as waste. Inability to draw 14 or fewer doses from a 15 dose vial should be reported as wastage (please report through submitting a ticket to [Helpdesk](#)).
- Vaccination sites should continue to reliably extract 10 doses from the current volume vial and plan to extract 14 doses from the new larger volume vial using the ancillary kit supplies provided. Ancillary kits will be reconfigured to extract 14 doses per vial, plus a 5% surplus to account for damage, wastage, or additional doses.

- Moderna has also updated the volume of their 10 dose vials to now reflect a maximum of 11 doses. You should be able to reliably pull 10 doses, but documentation will reflect that there is a maximum of 11. The vaccine ordering portal has been updated to reflect these changes.

Moderna updates to storage and handling

- Frozen Vaccine Moderna vials can now be stored frozen between -50° to -15°C (-58° to 5°F). This is an increased range from the original temperatures. This new, wider temperature range is consistent with temperature requirements for other recommended vaccines stored in the freezer.
- Vials may be stored between 8° to 25°C (46° to 77°F) for a total of 24 hours. This is an increase from 12 hours.
- Punctured vials may be held between 2° to 25°C (36° to 77°F) for up to 12 hours. Vials should be discarded 12 hours after the first puncture. This is an increase from 6 hours.

Ordering Portal Update

- The ordering portal has been updated to remove the minimum tray size constraints from the dose requested section. Providers may now order in quantities less than the minimum tray size and we will work to partner providers to accommodate these requests.

Upcoming Clinic Trainings and Office Hours

- **Weekly CoVP Update**
Provides CoVP Vaccinating Providers updates on the CoVP Program and Q&A with DPH staff. **Wednesdays** 9:00am-10:00am; Join: [CoVP Office Hours](#)
- **CoVP CT WiZ Enrollment Office Hours**
Provides information about the CoVP enrollment process in CT WiZ and Q&A with DPH staff. **Mondays & Thursdays** 12:00pm-12:30pm; Join: [CoVP CT WiZ Enrollment Office Hours](#)
- **Vaccine Storage and Handling Assessment**
For clinics who completed CoVP enrollment and received an invite to attend. **Tuesdays & Thursdays** 10:00am-11:00am and 1:00pm-2:00pm; **By invitation Only**
- **VAMS Live Helpdesk Office Hours**
Clinics can ask questions about VAMS functionality to DPH staff. **Tuesdays** 9:00am 10:00am & **Thursdays** – 1:00pm – 2:00pm; Join: [VAMS Live Helpdesk Office Hours](#)

Visit: [VAMS Training \(ct.gov\)](#) and [CT WiZ Training](#) for VAMS enhancement release notes and training materials on VAMS and CT WiZ.